ABSTRACT

THESIS: Discovering a Biophilic Seoul
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Despite being inhabited for more than 2000 years; the city of Seoul grew in isolation from Western cultures until the 19th century. However, because of being almost destroyed during the Korean War, the city spent most of the second half of the 20th century trying to rebuild itself. After recovering, Seoul shifted its policies to become a sustainable development-oriented city. Thus, the city engaged in its first major nature recovery project, the Mt. Namsan Restoration project, in 1991 and it enacted the first 5-year Plan for Park & Green Spaces in 1996, which pinpointed the start of the Green Seoul era. Biophilic cities are (ideal) cities that have copious amounts of nature, as a part of their design (Beatley, 2010). Prior research has revealed that Biophilic urbanism helps reducing urban heat island effect, and greenhouse emissions while bringing the emotional and psychological benefits of nature into the urban environment. However, the existing biophilic literature is largely focused on North American and European cities and, therefore, biophilic elements of non-western cities have yet to be comprehensively studied. This study aims to complement the current biophilic urbanism movement, by recording and analyzing the biophilic elements occurring in the Asian city of Seoul, Korea. To do so, I surveyed how much Seoulites consider the nature in their everyday life, I created an inventory of the major constructed nature projects that the city has started or completed since 1996 was done, and I study of the spatial distribution of green spaces throughout the city.